



# TEXAS HOUSE *of* REPRESENTATIVES

*James White*

*House District 19  
Jasper, Newton, Hardin, Polk, Tyler*

CORRECTIONS  
CHAIR

REDISTRICTING

JUDICIARY &  
CIVIL JURISPRUDENCE

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Friday, March 8th, 2019

**Contact:** Saul Mendoza  
(512) 463-0490

### **Chairman White Addresses Identification for Homeless Youth in First Bill Lay Out; Texas House Unveils School Safety Legislative Priorities** - Weekly Legislative Update 2/22/19 -

(Austin, TX) - During the week, the Texas House unveiled House Bill 17 that addresses Governor Greg Abbott's call for school safety legislation as a priority for the state. The governor issued his recommendations back in May 2018 and the House and Senate education committees held various hearings and issued their respective interim reports on the ways we can reduce school violence.

HB 17 provides direction on implementing safety measures through coordination with the Texas School Safety Center and sets accountability metrics to ensure that each campus security plan meets a statewide minimum standard. Enhancements to school facility construction and operations standards, training for employees and substitute employees, and greater public input are components required of districts and charter schools under the bill. A breakdown of the bill and its sections may be found below:

#### ***Texas Education Agency***

- HB 17 directs the Commissioner of Education to adopt rules that will ensure public and open-enrollment school facilities are secure and safe environments, including construction and renovation standards for those facilities. The Commissioner is directed to review these rules annually.

#### ***Multihazard Emergency Operations Plan (MEOP)***

- The bill applies the MEOP's new security requirements to open-enrollment charter schools.
- With House Bill 17, the MEOP requirements will be altered to:
  - Require an MEOP to include a chain of command for disaster/emergency protocol.
  - Facilitate response to natural disasters, shootings, and any other scenario identified by the Texas School Safety Center (TxSSC).
  - Provide for safety of students in portable buildings.



# TEXAS HOUSE *of* REPRESENTATIVES

*James White*

*House District 19  
Jasper, Newton, Hardin, Polk, Tyler*

CORRECTIONS  
CHAIR

REDISTRICTING

JUDICIARY &  
CIVIL JURISPRUDENCE

- Provide immediate notification to parents of any significant threat to the school or students, including identifying the individual responsible for overseeing that notification.
- Give training and safety protocol access currently afforded to regular employees to substitute teachers as well.
- Include names of individuals on the district's school safety and security committee.
- Include a requirement that MEOPs consider substitute employees when planning for building access, emergency communications, and emergency response training.
- Include a requirement that the MEOP audit report be reviewed, signed by the trustees and superintendent, and sent to the School Safety Center as well as TEA.

## ***Parent and Public Engagement***

- A district not in compliance with reporting requirements will be required to hold a board meeting notifying the public of noncompliance and soliciting public input. The bill also allows TEA to place the district under conservator control if, after the public hearing and sufficient opportunity to do so, the district has still not remedied the deficiency identified in the district's plan or audit.
- School safety and security committees will be assembled by districts and the membership will consist of local law enforcement and Office of Emergency Management, municipalities, two parents, and a classroom teacher. The committees are required to meet three times per year.
- Districts will be required to notify parents of affected students of a bomb threat or terroristic threat related to a district facility, and allows districts to include lockdown, lockout, or evacuation drills along with fire drills without requiring that they exceed 10 total drills in a year.

On this last point of the legislation, I have filed HB 507 that would create a taskforce on parent engagement. Although not specific to school safety, the taskforce would convene all stakeholders and agencies that can better prepare and provide resources to our Texas parents on issues that impact their children. It is my hope that if this bill passes, the task force would also address school safety during their discussions.

Additionally, the House has filed HB 1754 which creates a school safety allotment to assist school districts as they implement the new safety measures outlined in HB 17. Improving school



# TEXAS HOUSE *of* REPRESENTATIVES

*James White*

*House District 19  
Jasper, Newton, Hardin, Polk, Tyler*

CORRECTIONS  
CHAIR

REDISTRICTING

JUDICIARY &  
CIVIL JURISPRUDENCE

safety is a top priority for the Texas House. By enhancing school facilities, training campus staff, and providing greater public input, we will achieve a healthy learning environment for all Texas school children.

I had the pleasure of laying out my first bill of the session before the Human Services committee. HB 123 would provide a path for Texas youth who are in foster care, homeless, or unaccompanied to obtain their birth record and identification documents. These vulnerable children often find it difficult to obtain these forms of identification which they will ultimately need to be productive members of society. It is not only difficult for these children to obtain identification, but can be costly as well. Current statutes allow for the exemption of the driver's license or personal identification certificate fee for foster children, but do not include homeless children or unaccompanied youth. Making sure these children have the tools to succeed should be a priority of the state and I look forward to continuing to move this bill through the process.

CHI St. Luke's Livingston made a visit to my office to discuss the importance of providing the best possible healthcare rural areas like House District 19. I had a pleasure talking with Tim Ottinger, Director of Government Relations, and Ashley London, Director of Operations.

During Lufkin/Angelina County Day at the Capitol, The Coalition of Angelina County Youth advised me that they have now acquired enough funding to provide services into Polk county. This is terrific news for the youth of Polk county. I look forward to working with this outstanding organization to provide resources to Texas children and adolescents across the state to live happy and productive lives. I know the Polk county chapter will prove to be an great success.

Daniel Maher, the Executive Director with the Southeast Texas Food Bank, came to discuss their efforts in providing meals for residents in Beaumont and the surrounding area. Some of my constituents depend on these organizations when they fall on hard times. I thank Mr. Maher and the food bank for the work they do to ensure that Southeast Texans do not go hungry during their time of need.

Communities in Schools is a wonderful organization and a great resource to Texas families and schools. I am specially thankful to have met with the Executive Director, Reecie Goodman, and Keri Jeansonne of Jasper to discuss issues important to them. Communities in Schools have always been a great partner to work with in ensuring the best for our Texas school children.





# TEXAS HOUSE *of* REPRESENTATIVES

*James White*

*House District 19  
Jasper, Newton, Hardin, Polk, Tyler*

CORRECTIONS  
CHAIR

REDISTRICTING

JUDICIARY &  
CIVIL JURISPRUDENCE

Lastly, I had a wonderful visit with Kirbyville counselor, Amy Fountain, who was in town with the Association of Texas Professional Educators. Ms. Fountain is a remarkable school employee who truly cares for the children she serves. I am thankful for her high energy and her commitment to providing a school system that provides for the developmental and educational needs of all children.

The Capitol of Texas belongs to you and visiting the Capitol during the biennial legislative session is a great experience. To assist in arranging your visit please call Saul Mendoza, my Chief of Staff, at (512) 463-0490. Or, you can email him at [saul.mendoza@house.texas.gov](mailto:saul.mendoza@house.texas.gov).

###

